

Noquemanon Trails Network Statement on the Use of E-bikes

The Noquemanon Trail Network has developed an opinion and policy on the use of E-bikes on NTN managed trails. Michigan is one of many states that has adopted a three-class system to regulate e-bike use on streets and pathways ([Michigan E-bike Policy](#)). Class 1 is a pedal assisted bicycle that travels up to 20 miles per hour. Class 2 is a pedal assist and throttle assist bicycle that also travels up to 20 mile per hour. In addition, Class 3 is a throttled bicycle that travels up to 28 miles per hour. Throughout the state, Class 1 e-bikes are allowed on paved roads and pathways but not necessarily allowed on natural surfaces designated for non-motorized use. The state regulation has left it up to agents who manage properties to designate use of e-bikes on these trails.

Throughout the country, opinions of e-bike use on local pathways and streets are positive. They decrease harmful emissions and fossil fuel use and in the context of city use, they are decreasing transportation technology. Consideration of allowing the use of e-bikes on dirt trails is not as simple. Two major concerns about their use continue to be discussed. One question is; do e-bikes create greater impact on trails? On an e-bike, the electric motor that assists the rider has a potential to create more torque, which could lead to greater soil displacement. However, there has been no definitive evidence to show the e-bikes cause more impact on trails. As well, electric motor assistance can allow users to travel further on trails creating a potential to create a greater impact. The other issue is the social perception of e-bike use on dirt trails. There has been very little research done in this area but there are implications that this is an issue. The summer of 2020, the NTN surveyed its members and those who own land that trails go through about e-bike use on the trails. Approximately two thirds of those who responded were supportive of e-bike use on the trails. Members who were not supportive responded more harshly to opened questions leaving one to think that there may be a social issue regarding e-bike use on NTN trails.

Since the regulations have been in act, the sale of e-mountain bikes has drastically increased. In 2017, sales of e-mountain bike had increased 91%. There is a public interest in using them for several reasons. E-bikes assist users with physical challenges and disabilities, allowing them to enjoy and activity in which they would not otherwise be able to. E-bikes are motor assisted but do not produce harmful emissions when in use. Class 1 e-bikes are defined as non-motorized by the Consumer Products Safety Act (Pub.L.107-319). Finally, Class 1 e-bike use is already prevalent on NTN trails. They are used during special events by event staff, Marquette County Search and Rescue uses e-bikes to provide emergency assistance, and recreational use of e-bikes is prevalent.

Because of this, the NTN Board supports a policy to allow only Class 1 e-bikes to be used on a majority of NTN trails for recreational use if approved by the particular land owner. Class 2 and Class 3 e-bikes **are not allowed**. It is felt that they are more closely identified as a motorized vehicle and cross the line of non-motorized use and create safety hazards. E-bike users should be considerate of perceptions toward e-bike use on NTN trails and ride with consideration for those who are pedaling with no assistance.